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ABSTRACT

This document discusses the work of a consortium of interested producers and users of instructional materials, who worked on a project aimed at producing short films dealing with small group teaching, and developing general guidelines for the production and evaluation of visual stimulus material which would be suitable for staff development purposes. Each member of the group was asked to produce a half-hour videotape dealing with small group teaching and copies were distributed among members. The group then met to consider all the materials produced, select the most effective, and formulate evaluation and production guidelines. While a consensus was not reached, several important principles were identified. Focus of the consortium shifted after two meetings to the encouragement of the production of a wider range of materials and facilitating training programs for workshop leaders. Recommendations suggest four future concerns for consortium work. (JEG)

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THE PRODUCTION AND EVALUATION OF FILM MATERIAL FOR USE IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR TERTIARY TEACHERS

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Introduction

Most universities and many colleges of advanced education now have units which carry out R & D work aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning within their own institution. An important part of their work is the conduct of staff development programmes designed, in the main, to assist academic staff to increase their teaching skills. Such programmes may involve the use of film and videotape material to serve as a stimulus for discussion, to demonstrate particular techniques, or to provide a wide range of examples of methods of teaching.

Some 16mm films of this type were produced in the early 1970's by the Tertiary Education Research Centre at the University of N.S.W. and these have been used extensively in Australia and overseas. There is, however, very little material of this kind available, despite the increasing demand for it, and in 1975 T.E.R.C. proposed to the E.R.D.C. that funds be made available to support a small-scale project aimed at producing some short films dealing with small group teaching and developing some general guidelines for the production and evaluation of visual stimulus material which would be suitable for staff development purposes.

The Committee suggested that a consortium be formed of interested producers and users so that the benefits of creating a larger pool of material could be evaluated. Accordingly, on 16th June 1976, a meeting was convened at the University of N.S.W. under the chairmanship of Professor S.S. Dunn. The group had the following members: Mrs. Barbara Falk (representing E.R.D.C.), Dr. W.C. Hall (University of Adelaide), Dr. T. Hore (Monash University), Dr. J.P. Powell (U.N.S.W.), Professor E. Roe (University of Queensland), Mr. P. Sheldrake (Flinders University), Dr. H. Stanton (University of Tasmania).

After viewing a number of the "Trigger" films which had been produced by T.E.R.C. it was agreed that the group be formally established as a consortium and that a member of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne be invited to become a member - Dr. J.A. Bowden subsequently accepted this invitation. Each member (excluding Mrs. Falk) was asked to produce a half-hour videotape dealing with small group teaching and copies were to be distributed to each other member. The group was then to meet early in 1977 to consider all of this material and select those episodes which were agreed to be most effective. Evaluation and production guidelines were to be formulated after the videotapes had been tried out in workshop settings.

The Material

1. Melbourne: four excerpts from an actual class showing examples of a talkative student, a silent student, and two types of teacher intervention.
2. Monash: (a) four sequences from a simulated court case involving the dismissal of a tenured member of staff for alleged incompetence in teaching.
   (b) four episodes (actuality) concerned with the teaching of anaesthetics in the operating theatre; each episode is repeated with voice-over comments drawing attention to interaction features.
   (c) Simulation of a hostile climate during a seminar. At several points a question is posed concerning non-verbal events and the section immediately prior is replayed.
3. Adelaide: a condensed drama tutorial (actuality) is presented followed by brief individual interviews with the tutor and six students. These interviews involve reflection on their role in the group and are accompanied by flashbacks.
4. U.N.S.W. (a) the first ten minutes of a law class (actuality) is presented followed by a five minute interview with the lecturer who comments on the class.
   (b) an episode (actuality) from a physics class followed by an interview with the tutor and then by an interview with the tutor and three students.
5. Queensland: four simulated tutorials with an English class illustrating different approaches to the handling of small groups.
6. Tasmania: several episodes (actuality) demonstrating techniques for handling small groups.
7. Flinders: a continuous sequence (actuality) showing a group reviewing the role of group leader and considering general issues about leadership.

Most tapes were accompanied by brief notes which supplied some background information and indicated ways in which the material might be used.

As may be seen, a considerable variety of approaches were employed: the length of items ranged from two to thirty minutes; some episodes were drawn from actual classes while others were simulated and designed to illustrate specific points; flashbacks, replay with voice-over, interviews and insertion of questions were all used. The technical quality of the tapes varied greatly depending on whether they were made under studio or classroom conditions.

Review of the material.

The consortium met at the University of Melbourne on 29th August 1977. Those present were: John Anwyl, Barbara Falk, Terry Hore, John Powell, Ernest Roe, Peter Sheldrake, Harry Stanton.

The purpose of the meeting was to review progress and decide on future action. Most of the discussion was concerned with attempting to identify general principles for developing and evaluating material, with special reference to the seven videotapes which had been made by the consortium in 1976-1977. Although it was not possible for the group to arrive at a consensus on any major principle a number of important points were made and these are summarized below.

1. How realistic does the material need to be? Genuine teaching situations have the advantage of portraying actual events and are thus likely to prove more acceptable to staff, but they usually suffer from poor technical quality - especially sound - and an audience is likely to react negatively to this. Staged episodes can permit much better production levels and allow tighter control over content, but their disadvantage is that they can appear theatrical and unconvincing. It was pointed out that the exaggerated portrayal of poor teaching styles can be useful in that the audience can feel that their own teaching is superior and hence not be threatened by a display of techniques which may not be within their own teaching repetoire.
2. Need to consider the purposes for which the material will be used. Suggestions included: the triggering of self-exploration by members of the audience; the development of observational skills through attending to the details of what is portrayed, e.g. evidence of non-verbal communication; the demonstration of particular teaching skills and class management techniques;

the presentation of problematic situations for which the audience can consider possible solutions; the depicting of situations which can lead to the discussion of wider issues such as staff-student relations and the range of responsibilities of academic staff.

3. Much depends on the skill and resourcefulness of the workshop leader who is using the material. It was argued that a skilled leader could make good use of any material. Others claimed that it was often difficult to use material produced elsewhere because its content was over-determined by the uses which others had in mind when producing it. The attitudes and experience which the audience bring with them are also very important in shaping their response to the material: this may mean, for example, that it is difficult for teachers of engineering to respond favourably to a record of a drama tutorial.
4. What kinds of workshop activity really need a visual stimulus to get discussion going? There may not be much point, for example, in depicting a role-playing episode because this can readily be done by the members of the group.
5. There was a good deal of agreement on the need for material to be able to be used in a variety of ways, although it was not clear what characteristics it should possess for this to be possible.
6. It was pointed out that if material could be made available in the form of cassettes or loops then this would ease the task of a workshop leader. Reel-to-reel videotapes are not easy to use because of the necessity to locate particular incidents and this often involves re-winding and consequent loss of pace in a workshop.

In order to assist in the identification of general principles of evaluation and production it was agreed that each member of the consortium would view all the tapes again in order to:

(a) Select up to five short episodes which they felt they could use for workshop purposes, give the reasons for choosing each one, and describe one way in which they might use it.

(b) Select one longer self-contained episode which could be used for a variety of purposes, give the reasons for choosing it, and describe the ways in which it might be used.

The consortium convened again on the 10th of November 1977 at the Australian National University and this meeting was attended by John Anwyl, Barbara Falk, Neil Paget, John Powell and Ernest Roe. The main aim was to continue the attempt to identify general principles of production and evaluation by examining the nature of the material chosen as a result of the decision made at the August meeting and by considering the reasons for making those choices. It was felt that the written comments which had been circulated would be of value to other users so these have been included as an Appendix rather than being summarized for incorporation in the text of the report.

Before the end of the meeting it became clear that the formulation of general principles of production and evaluation was a much more difficult task then had originally been envisaged and it was unanimously agreed that the consortium should focus its efforts upon encouraging the production of a wider range of materials and facilitating training programmes for workshop leaders. Several new points emerged from the discussion, however, and the importance of others which had been raised at the August meeting was again stressed.

1. It was generally agreed that because of the severe shortage of material of this type priority should be given to greatly increased production.
2. It was also generally agreed that the skill of the workshop leader who would be using the film was of vital importance: the best material would be ineffective in the hands of a beginner who lacked the techniques to exploit its potentialities. Associated with this was the point that the content should not be over-determined by the producer and a users' motto of "adapt not adopt" was suggested.
3. The length of each item was seen as being constrained by its main purpose e.g. a critical incident or "trigger" could often run for less than a minute, whereas episodes which were intended to be illustrative of a variety of techniques and issues clearly needed to be somewhat longer. It was pointed out that viewers may be more tolerant of longer items if they know that these will be subjected to detailed exploration and discussion later.
4. An important use of visual material of this type was felt to be the demonstration effect of watching other teachers doing something new with confidence and effectiveness. Staff may be more willing to try a teaching technique which is unfamiliar to them if they see

somebody else using it.

5. Producers of film or video material should ensure that they have "clearance" for its use by other people so that the available stock of films may be steadily increased; this is particularly important with videotapes of actual teaching situations.

Conclusions

Although progress towards the formulation of a set of general principles was disappointingly limited everyone agreed that the work of the consortium had been very worthwhile. A set of new material had been produced and there had been a valuable exchange of ideas and experiences. In view of the usefulness of film material for staff development workshops it was agreed that the following steps be taken:

1. That the consortium remain in being as a group of users/producers concerned with encouraging, by whatever means seem appropriate, the extension of the stock of film and videotape material available for staff development purposes in Australia.
2. That the Directors of all Australian higher education R & D units be asked to assist by producing not more than ten minutes of videotape material dealing with questioning skills. Arrangements would then be made for these tapes to be available for viewing and discussion at the 1978 HERDSA conference.
3. That the material produced to-date by the consortium be made freely available: interested users should contact the R & D units concerned if they wish to obtain a copy of a tape and associated print materials. All existing material and all material produced in future will be listed in LABYRINTH, the clearinghouse bulletin for higher education research and development units in Australia and New Zealand. The first issue of LABYRINTH appeared in November 1977 and it will be published twice a year; it may be obtained from T.E.D.I., University of Queensland.
4. That the E.R.D.C. be approached to provide financial support for a training programme aimed at increasing the skills of workshop leaders who are interested in using this type of material. This would include not only staff from R & D units but also teachers who wished to organize departmental workshops with their colleagues. Costs could be minimized by holding these meetings in a number of major centres. The 1978 HERDSA conference will provide an opportunity to run a pilot workshop using the videotapes dealing with questioning techniques.

Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX

Selections of material, together with reasons for choosing it and possible uses, prepared by members for the meeting of the consortium in Canberra. Each contributor is designated by a capital letter.

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A. 1. The demonstration of techniques "closed-eyes", "three matches" and "paraphrasing" shown in the Tasmania tape.

2. "Utopia" on the Queensland tape since good examples are difficult to find.

3. The "talking over" segment in the Melbourne tape would be useful to see if tutors perceived the event.

4. The interview with the law tutor in the U.N.S.W. tape is useful for prompting discussion. Also the interview with the tutor in the Adelaide tape.

.....

B. 1. Tasmania.

I found this a very useful teaching tape, and it made a whole that was very difficult to break up. Indeed, with a brief introduction, titles, etc., this would be useful in any tape library as an introduction to some small group techniques.

However, if I were to select a short section it would be at the end of this tape (Incident 1 - 436 - end of tape) where Harry Stanton indicates the possibilities that arise when the group interaction is stopped and members report on their thoughts and emotions. This incident highlights a very interesting issue: how much should you tell in advance about what is about to happen? - it contrasts nicely with incidents 2 and 3 below and I would be inclined to use the three as a set.

2. Queensland.

On reflection, I found the first two of these four examples a bit too "stayed"and felt this was counterproductive to their value as triggers. I think that "real" events are often more stimulating. However the third and fourth examples were much more readily accepted - they raised the other problem, which is that it is much easier to identify problems as incidents than successes.

However, a nice contrast is made between the tutor setting out the agenda for the group in the third example (Incident 2 - 196-207) and the tutor allowing the group, and especially the student who was presenting, to determine the pattern of interaction (Incident 3 - 286-288). Taken together with incident 1, these three made excellent triggers for "situation setting in small groups".

3. Adelaide.

On reviewing this tape, I found the second part not very helpful. However, it did identify some of the more interesting incidents, and I thought that two here were very good -

and	the student unable to break in	(Incident 4 - 259-261)
	the over-aggressive student	(Incident 5 - 292-297)

Both of these could be used to initiate discussion in ways of managing types of students.

The first half - the group in action - was, I thought, the richest of the materials for varied use. There were many incidents in this tape that I could use for illustrating student types, interaction styles, problems in group management, etc. This is the tape I would nominate for a variety of uses.

4. Melbourne.

In many ways this was the closest of the original tapes to the traditional trigger concept, and I think it was very successful in that respect. However, given the notes on confidentiality over this tape, I am not sure how far it is available for use.

One part, perhaps more "available" than most of the tape, that provided an excellent incident, was the "lecturer determined to make a point" - especially when the student attempts to break in (Incident 6 - 286-288). Excellent trigger for discussion on style and strategy.

5. U.N.S.W.

This was close to the kind of material I had intended to produce. I doubt that either are good triggers as they stand, but they are very good examples of teachers' styles.

For an incident, I liked the example of free-ranging discussion, kept to the point by the lecturer, in the first example - and the way in which the students all managed to get in (despite odd glimpses of concern at times). A good example, and potential trigger as an example of "how to do it", is about half-way through (Incident 7 - 138-172). (Note, this is a long section, but watch the student at right front, who speaks toward the end of this segment.)

6. Flinders.

Since this was never completed, it is difficult to see what use the tape might have been. I did like one incident - that has been noted by many viewers - which illustrated the general point that much of what they were saying applied to the situation that was then taking place. The example refers to the negative challenge idea - that everyone responds to ideas positively and so no real challenge takes place - and where this idea is put forward, the whole group agrees! (Incident 8 - 272-277).

7. Monash.

I found the sequences dealing with anaesthetics in this tape particularly good and felt that the whole set (1-3) make a very useful trigger in their own right - though obviously dealing with what some might regard as a rather specialised area of non-verbal interaction. As for the shorter triggers, I felt two chunks from the last segment, showing the tutorial, provided two nice little chunks that could be added to the cumulative tape; these are the points where the effects of the tutor coming into the room and the group are shown (463-4 on the counter) and the other section where the tutor asked the student to speak up. (412-6)

C. 1. U.N.S.W. - tutor explaining his reactions to a student coming in late.

Reasons for choice - students arriving late are a common experience for tutors/lecturers; it is relatively straightforward, non-threatening matter, perhaps to break the ice with a group of academic staff attending a workshop, all of whom are likely to have views on it.

Also, the material is quite rich in that several of the points made could trigger interesting discussion and even some self-examination (the tutor on the tape is doing so); e.g. he thinks he has a prejudice against students who come in late, so "makes a joke of it to get it out of his mind"; "he's quite a good student" (question - how is this relevant??); "he's never told me why he comes late" (would it be improper to ask him?) should he give a reason? why? - and this could lead to discussion about what kind of relationship tutors want with their students - what rules, conventions, courtesies, etc.?).

Way I might use this episode - already indicated above. It could be an effective starter (trigger!) for a group of staff at a workshop. I might simply set the context (explain that it is from an interview following a videotaping of an actual tutorial), show the episode, and invite comments, in the expectation that the points noted above would emerge. Alternatively, I might guide the discussion - asking "What do you do about students who come in late?" or "What sort of atmosphere would you expect at one of his tutorials?" - and subsequently raise other issues, if they didn't come up. It would depend on the nature and experience of the group, and on what had gone before (if anything), or what was coming after.

2. Melbourne - the talkative and the silent student.

This series of brief excerpts begins with the narrator's comment on the silent student, the brief scene of her animation before the class starts, and continues with extracts from the talkative student to convey the message that he goes on and on, with the silent one sitting next to him - being silent.

Reasons for choice - again this portrays a common experience for tutors, a little more central than the last. Using the last as a relatively minimal issue which nevertheless could lead to some more general discussion about relationships between tutors and students,

I would use this as an introduction to issues concerned with the actual conduct of a tutorial. I see this episode as following on from the last but again dealing with fairly large, simple issues - either for a group of beginners or for the early stages of a workshop or series of sessions.

Way I might use it - the context here would need some explanation - a group of staff in the roles of students, actually doing a course, etc. I might pose the problem(s) before showing the excerpts - the one who talks too much, the one who sits and says nothing. It would depend on how forthcoming the group were after discussion of the first episode whether I felt any need to initiate discussion rather than simply inviting comments. I might even ask "Who is the talkative and who is the silent member of this group? Tell us how it feels!".

Points I would hope to cover: the silent student is said to be a good student (refer back to discussion of episode 1 - the good student coming in late): are there any general principles for tutors with respect to talkative/silent students? What might you do? Do you think contributions at tutorials should be assessed? (As was the case with the law tutorial referred to in the first episode.)

If a member of the group commented on what the talkative student was actually saying, this might lead us into some interesting explorations (e.g. his theme that when staff are put in the position of students, they behave in the ways they criticise in students). This, and the episode generally, could be used to focus attention on the group behaviour we were actually experiencing at the time.

Episodes 1 and 2 do not necessarily go together, of course. But I see them as a useful pair to stimulate perhaps a whole session of discussion at a workshop for staff (particularly tutors or others teaching small groups) and probably the first session. They would, I believe, provide material to refer back to at later sessions; for example, we might relate a later experiment with the 3-match technique to the talkative/silent issue.

3. Queensland - excerpts from "guided discussion" tutorial.

This excerpt is made up of two brief extracts in which the tutor is actively guiding the discussion.

Reasons for choice - the excerpt raises some major questions about the role of the tutor, about tutor intervention and control, and should provide a number of stimuli for detailed discussion.

Way I might use it - (This would depend partly/largely on the context, but I am thinking of this as the third episode used in a series of sessions. Here we are moving from the relatively general, less complex matters likely to be covered in episodes 1 and 2 into more subtle and detailed explorations of what actually goes on or might go on during a tutorial.) I might play the whole episode (two extracts) through without comment, but then break them up for consideration into smaller segments. Among the points to be covered are:

- the enthusiasm of the tutor and of Rod (the student giving the paper) - the tutor's restraining Rod -

- the tutor's attempts to bring other members of the group into the discussion - how successful/unsuccessful? - why?

- the tutor's determination to control the topics discussed - even when a student wants to take the discussion back to what Rod has said, she cuts this off "Let's not cover the same ground"; and later "Let's not get side-tracked - it's only 6 weeks to the end of semester."

- the tutor saying what she wants to say at length, by contrast with her treatment of the group.

- the tutor using praise in a dismissive way "That's a challenging way of looking at it" and cutting off that discussion.

(By this stage, if this were one of a series of workshop sessions, I would probably have broken off more than once to relate the points emerging from discussion to the behaviour of our own group. If practicable, all our sessions would have been recorded on either sound or videotape so that we could go back to examine them.)

4. Adelaide - tutor's comments after drama tutorial; four student comments plus flashbacks.

Reasons for choice - the extracts refer to a number of common experiences in small group teaching, and should provoke discussion. As the last material in a sequence of sessions, I see this as a fairly comfortable, not too difficult experience for the group.

Way I might use it - the tutor's comments could be an entirely separate item. I see it as simply raising the interesting problem of animated, overlapping discussion. Is he right that they do hear each other? Does it matter? What are the advantages/disadvantages of structure, in what circumstances is it important, etc. etc.?

(If I intended to make a lot of this, I would probably show at least one extract from the actual session. I think this has limited use however, because few academics would comprehend or have the slightest interest in the subject-matter.)

The first two student extracts would be played for their possibility of evoking a sympathetic response from the group. Maybe we would have amongst us someone who was accustomed to "make a few cracks"; very likely we would have a frustrated member or two who felt they could not get their word in, were always interrupted. By this stage I would expect we would all be at ease discussing our own and each other's behaviour. If these first two extracts were not productive, however, we would simply press on.

The frustrations of the second student lead quite naturally to the frustrations of the third who "didn't have enough time to develop points", "has ideas but can't bring them up." This could provoke discussion of more subtle questions - of the restraint exercised by members of a group in the interests of its effective functioning; of those who have a conscience about diversions, side-tracks, etc., and those who do not; of differing views about what is relevant to the discussion anyway. The brief interview with the fourth student, "not very happy with his contribution to anything" , could be an effective final stimulus, leading to constructive suggestions about

how students like him could be assisted, how tutorials might be improved, and that in turn could justify a review of the workshop programme - going back over what had emerged, showing again excerpts which now seemed most relevant, both from those triggers and from the videotapes of our own discussions.

Finally, these notes are deliberately off-the-top-of-the-head first ideas. If I were giving close consideration to the material, planning an actual workshop for staff, I might devise something quite different; or begin in the same place but end somewhere entirely different!

D. 1. Adelaide:

This could be useful to stimulate discussion on the problem of "space". One of the difficulties with small group work is that so many participants are not sufficiently assertive enough to take space for themselves when they have something to say. Opportunities need to be created either by the group leader or by other members to create space for such people and hopefully, by so doing, give them increased confidence in their own worth and in the value of their contributions.

2. Melbourne:

This incident could be used to stimulate discussion on the issue of dominance. In particular, how can the dominant group member be subdued without interferring with his effectiveness. Discussion here could well centre on the effect the dominant participant has on other group members, and how he reacts to attempts by the tutor and by his fellow participants to curb his dominance. In particular, considerable time could be given to ways in which the group acting quite independently of the leader can bring peer pressure to bear on someone who persists in monopolizing discussion time.

3. Queensland:

The incident I have selected here involves starting a session and in particular the problem of tutor dominance. This could be very useful working with staff in exploring ways in which tutors can facilitate group discussion without taking a major role themselves and by so doing stifling interaction. It could also be used with students to generate discussion on what they would be able to do to combat such dominance coming from the leader.

4. Tasmania:

This episode is also concerned with starting a session, in this case through the use of a common stimulus. It could be used in combination with the Queensland episode to show one way in which a tutor could begin a session without overwhelming students. It opens up the whole issue of the use of a common stimulus such as an article, a video-tape, and audio-tape, a slide, to provide material for discussion.

5. Monash: - the long episode.

I have chosen the twelve-minute seminar on this tape in which the drama group were asked to create a hostile climate. The reasons for which I have chosen this particular episode are:

(i) the guide questions are very useful in directing attention to key issues;

(ii) it would provide a very useful stimulus for a discussion of group roles;

(iii) focus could centre strongly on tutor behaviour;

(iv) it is rich in non-verbal material and one way I think it could be used most effectively would be to turn off the sound and simply concentrate on the non-verbal cues evinced by participants;

(v) it could be very useful as an alter-ego exercise in which viewers identified with particular "actors" attempting to feel what they were feeling and think what they were thinking.

Generally, this episode is so rich in stimulus material that many more uses would emerge every time it was employed with a fresh group of people.

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E. 1. U.N.S.W:

Part of the episode dealing with the physics tutorial provides a very good example of a particular questioning technique and the failure of the tutor to appreciate that the students have not grasped what he is asking them. I would use this as part of a workshop on the use of questions, or as an example of the difficulties which can be encountered when tutors and students bring different assumptions to bear on what is thought to be a shared problem. It is also a useful example of a style of teaching in which the tutor tries to avoid supplying answers or leading discussion in a pre-determined direction.

2. Melbourne:

There is an excellent example here of a teacher's failure to acknowledge - or even recognize - a students need to join in the discussion. This could be used to sharpen observational powers and monitoring skills. It could also be used to open up a wider discussion of authority-dependency relationships in small groups.

The episode dealing with the talkative student could also be used to stimulate discussion of what is a common problem for tutors and other group members: how can the resources of a group be used to exercise control over members who tend to dominate? Is it possible to achieve this without damaging the self-esteem of the individual concerned?

3. Adelaide:

My choice of a longer episode which could be used for a variety of purposes would be the Adelaide drama group plus the interview with the tutor - but excluding the other interviews and flashbacks which seem to be over-determined. This material is extremely rich and depicts a variety of techniques being used by the tutor as well as a wide range of student "types" and interaction incidents. Although simulated it is very convincing and offers an acceptable example of a group working well but not too well.

I would use this to explore a number of issues involved in small group teaching and to examine in detail the management moves made by the tutor. The interview with the tutor in which he makes a brief assessment of the effectiveness of the meeting also offers a useful example of how teaching can be self-monitored.